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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission
317th meeting
Thursday, 21 April 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

Chair: Mr. Al Bayati ..... (Iraq)

The meeting was called to order at 12.15 p.m.

Report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session

The Chair: We shall start the final meeting of the 2011 substantive session with agenda item 7, which concerns the adoption of draft reports of subsidiary bodies on the various agenda items and the consideration and adoption of the draft report of the Commission, as contained in documents A/CN.10/2011/CRP.2, CRP.3, CRP.4 and CRP.5. Those documents have been circulated to delegations.

In accordance with the agreed programme of work, we will first consider and adopt the draft report of the Commission. Thereafter, we will hear concluding statements by delegations.

To start the process of considering and adopting the draft reports of subsidiary bodies on individual agenda items, I should like to call on the Chairs of each Working Group to introduce their respective reports.

I now give the floor to Mr. Knut Langeland, representative of Norway and Chair of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, namely, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", to introduce the draft report of the Working Group, as contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.3.

Mr. Langeland (Norway), Chair of Working Group I: I have the honour to introduce the draft report of Working Group I (A/CN.10/2011/CRP.3). I would first like to thank the members of the Disarmament Commission for the trust vested in me to chair the deliberations of this important Working Group. I must admit that the task was not easy. After the seven meetings allocated to the Group, we finally adopted, by consensus, the draft report being submitted for the consideration of members. The draft report is very simple and follows the established pattern of all previous reports. It is strictly a procedural report, as we were unable to reach consensus on the outcome document. Let me underline that the discussions in Working Group I were constructive. We held useful exchanges of views on a number of important and difficult issues related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In my own capacity, I produced a non-exhaustive non-paper on the issues that I saw as being relevant. Unfortunately, time did not allow us to go through the whole paper. I know that some delegations have strong views on issues that we did not have time to discuss. Evidently, as I have said, we did not reach consensus. The non-paper was therefore submitted under my own responsibility and without prejudice to the position of other delegations. However, I believe that we fulfilled our mission as a deliberative body. Let me also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Secretariat for its excellent assistance.

I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that the draft report of Working Group I will be approved by consensus.

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The Chair: There being no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft report of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, as contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.3.

It was so decided.

The Chair: I would now like to move on to the draft report of Working Group II on agenda item 5, entitled "Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade", as contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.4. I give the floor to Mr. Kayode Laro, representative of Nigeria and Chair of Working Group II, to introduce the Working Group's draft report.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria), Chair of Working Group II: I have the honour to introduce the draft report of Working Group II. Like the Chair of Working Group I, who spoke before me just now, I too would like to thank members of the Disarmament Commission for having given me the opportunity to chair the deliberations of Working Group II. We had seven meetings in the Working Group, the same number allocated to the other Working Groups. However, we were not able to reach consensus on the issues that we deliberated upon, although in the end we came up with a report that was adopted by consensus and has been submitted for the Commission's consideration in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.4.

The draft report follows the pattern of preceding sessions. It is strictly procedural and, as I said earlier, we were not able to reach a consensus on the outcome document. The inability to reach consensus was not due to a lack of trying; it was just that, in my view, we ran into time problems. The discussions were quite engaging; a lot of delegations had something to say. I also observed during our deliberations that there was a very significant spirit of flexibility and willingness to compromise. However, despite that, we could not reach a consensus on elements of a draft declaration.

As I said, we started work with a non-paper from the 2010 session. The paper began at 10 pages and went up to 16. On my own responsibility, I introduced a non-paper that formed the basis of our discussion in the later meetings. Our deliberations covered the principles and objectives of disarmament of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We also discussed conventional armaments. We covered disarmament machinery and other issues. However, that was half a week ago, and we could not come up with an outcome document. The draft report of the Working Group has been presented, and was adopted by consensus.

The Chair: If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft report of Working Group II on item 5, as contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.4.

It was so decided.

The Chair: Finally, I would like to move on to the draft report of Working Group III on agenda item 6, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", as contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.5. I give the floor to Mrs. Liseth Ancidey, representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Chair of Working Group III, to introduce the Working Group's draft report.

Mrs. Ancidey (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Chair of Working Group III (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my honour to introduce the draft report of Working Group III. At the outset, I should like to thank the members of the Disarmament Commission for the trust they vested in me to lead the discussions of that important Working Group.

Working Group III held a total of seven meetings from 15 to 20 April. Its draft report, contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.5, is purely procedural in nature and was adopted by consensus. The Working Group held deliberations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons in a very cordial and professional environment in which we exchanged national positions and ideas that fuelled a rich debate on this matter. As Chair of the Working Group, I submitted for the Group's consideration two different versions of a non-paper circulated under my full responsibility. No consensus was reached following due consideration by delegations. Nevertheless, I must note that the Working Group's deliberations were very positive and enlightening, helping to fulfil the Commission's mandate to serve as a deliberative body of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

I should especially like to thank you, Sir, and your delegation for your support and tireless efforts in helping move us towards consensus. I should also like to warmly thank the Secretariat for all its work, in particular Ms. Christa Giles and the members of her team. I also thank the representatives of the Office for

Disarmament Affairs, especially Ms. Pamela Maponga and Mr. Hideki Matsuno, for their professional assistance. I further thank the conference officers and the interpreters.

While we did not reach consensus, I also thank all delegations for their contributions. I believe that it was a very useful and substantive discussion with the active participation of delegations. I am grateful to all of them, and to you, Sir. I hope that the draft report of Working Group III will also be adopted by the Commission by consensus.

The Chair: If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft report of Working Group III on item 6, as contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.5.

It was so decided.

The Chair: Now that the Commission has adopted the reports of its subsidiary bodies, I would like to thank the Chairs of the three Working Groups for their dedication. The Commission is deeply indebted to them for their effective leadership in guiding the deliberations of the Working Groups on three very complex issues.

We will now begin our consideration of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.2. I have the pleasure of giving the floor to Mr. Dadjedji Hervé Djokpe of Benin, Rapporteur of the Commission, to introduce the draft report of the Commission.

Mr. Djokpe (Benin), Rapporteur of the Commission (*spoke in French*): It is my great honour and pleasure to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the Commission's draft report, contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.2. The draft report contains the following four chapters: "Introduction", "Organization and work of the 2011 substantive session", "Documentation" and "Conclusions and recommendations".

Allow me now to address the text of the draft report and to draw delegations' attention to amendments to certain paragraphs of document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.2. Beginning at the phrase "[f]or its substantive session" in paragraph 3 after the word "agenda". In paragraph 6, we need to correct the name of the Rapporteur. In paragraph 17, we will keep the heading of the paragraph, but add some new wording. As is customary, the final outcome report is a factual description of the working and deliberations of the Commission during the session.

The section on substantive information contains the reports of the three Working Groups that have just been adopted by the Commission and which will be contained in the current report. The section as it stands reflects the compromises and agreements reached by delegations following delicate negotiations conducted in a spirit of constructive cooperation. The Commission held no parallel meetings, and since discussions within the three Groups progressed well, it was my privilege to see first-hand the three Chairs and delegations work with skill, care and equanimity to reach a consensus on three extremely complex questions on the disarmament agenda. The fact that the recommendations could not be adopted by consensus as outcome documents is a reflection of the complexity of the issues at hand, and not of insufficient efforts made by delegations.

The Commission as a deliberative organ can consider issues in a concrete and pragmatic manner, and conduct lengthy philosophical or conceptual analyses without being subject to constraints linked to negotiations. In that regard, all oral and written observations that were submitted constituted a rich framework on which the Groups based their work. I commend the courageous efforts of the Chairs of the three Working Groups, who were convinced that they had to succeed and determined to act accordingly. They were thus able to maintain the integral unity of this rich array of ideas. I take this opportunity to say how honoured I was to perform the functions of Rapporteur of the Working Groups at this session, and in particular to work under the wise leadership of our Chair, Ambassador Hamid Al Bayati. It was a pleasure and an enlightening experience to participate in the work of the Bureau alongside the Vice-Chairs and the three Chairs of the Working Groups, who steered the deliberations of the subsidiary organs wisely and effectively.

Finally, I wish to thank Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for the advice and support that he gave to the Bureau and the member States. I would also like to wholeheartedly thank Mr. Shaaban Shaaban, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management, for the excellent organization and quality of services provided for the Commission's meetings. I would also

like to thank all the members of the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and helpful contribution.

Allow me also to thank the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Sergei Cherniavsky, for his unswerving assistance. I also thank Mr. Ioan Tudor, Special Assistant to Mr. Sergio Duarte; Ms. Christa Giles, Secretary of Working Group III; and the personnel of the Office of Disarmament Affairs, who provided their assistance to the deliberations.

With that, I recommend that the Commission adopt the draft report as contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.2.

The Chair: We shall now consider the draft report of the Commission chapter by chapter.

If there are comments on Chapter I, "Introduction", paragraph 1, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt this paragraph.

It was so decided.

The Chair: We turn next to Chapter II. Are there any comments on Chapter II, "Organization and work of the 2011 substantive session", paragraphs 2 to 14, as orally amended?

Mr. Janssens de Bisthoven (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): My colleague from Algeria proposed that the names of the Vice-Chairs be stated in full. I would be grateful if the Commission could uphold this proposal.

The Chair: I have been told by the Secretary that it was the tradition not to mention the names of the Vice-Chairs, but only their respective States. If the Commission wishes to change that, I would ask whether there are any comments on that subject.

Mr. Bouabdallah (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to make a brief comment in support of the suggestion of our colleague from Algeria. Given that those who have actively contributed to the work of the Commission, be they members of the Bureau or the Secretariat or the Chairs of the Working Groups, are mentioned by name, I see no particular problem listing our colleagues the Vice-Chairs by name, from a strict point of view of equality. I therefore support the proposal made by the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Aly (Egypt): That is indeed a fair comment from my Algerian colleague, which has been supported by Belgium and France. We fully understand the very constructive and dedicated role played by the Vice-Chairs during this current session. However, we should be very cautious to ensure that our enthusiastic support for their personal role does not overrule the traditions that we have observed in the past. We should also bear in mind that we have reached the end of a three-year cycle and are beginning a new one. What has the tradition been every year in that regard? That tradition should be applicable to everybody. I know that this is not a substantive issue and that, at the end of the day, we are flexible in that regard. We just wanted to flag the issue. A more factual consideration would be the nomination of the Vice-Chairs for the session. Have they all been nominated by name, or has interest been expressed by country only? If all of the national nominations for the Vice-Chairs have been collectively put forward by candidate name, then it is fair for us to consider whether or not we want to change the practice. If that has not been the case, then I think we are better off with the current tradition. In any case, my delegation is flexible on that point. We want only to ensure that we are not deviating from our traditions over the past period.

The Chair: I just want to make sure that reference was being made to the note verbale, which usually has the name in addition to the country.

Ms. Douti (Greece): Because I am consistent on matters of consistency, I would agree with my Egyptian colleague on maintaining consistency with the past two years of the cycle. If we want to change the practice of indicating the names of the representatives of the countries of the Vice-Chairs, we can do that as of next year, which marks the beginning of the new cycle.

Mr. Moktefi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): My delegation does not wish to call attention to itself regarding this problem of form, but would suggest that we proceed to compile a nominative list of Bureau members, in particular the Vice-Chairs. We have noticed that it has been somewhat difficult to identify Vice-Chairs. Perhaps one way to encourage potential candidates for those positions would be for their names to be clearly stated. In our opinion, the argument of tradition makes no sense whatsoever. The Commission is in charge of its own rules of procedure and such a change would not do any great harm. Moreover, during our deliberations on the Commission's draft report (A/CN.10/2011/CRP.2), we changed our practice by deleting any references to conclusions and recommendations, which had been customary. We were

brave enough to break with that tradition a few minutes ago. Why can we not retain that courage and change another custom by making this change? That could be the very minimal result of our work during the current session.

Mr. El Oumni (Morocco): We are aware that this is not a very substantive issue and we do not wish to prolong this meeting, but I fully share the positions expressed by the representatives of Egypt and Greece. If we are talking about fairness, then let us be fair to all of our colleagues who have been Vice-Chairs during the current cycle. We can change that during the next cycle.

The Chair: We now have two recommendations: one is to leave mentioning the names until the next cycle and the other is to mention the names in this year's draft report (A/CN.10/2011/CRP.2). I shall leave it up to members to decide. In that way, we would have a compromise, as we did in the most recent discussion.

Mr. Aly (Egypt): I think that the compromise has already been put forward by the representative of Greece. This discussion is not a new one, nor is it a discovery that emerged during the current session alone. I remember that we had a long discussion on the matter in 2009. At that time, the Secretariat took the floor and advised strongly against changing the practice of mentioning the names, arguing mainly that it was a national role. The same person was not present in all cases; sometimes, the person sent someone to represent them. At the end of the day, however, it was a national role forwarded by a national note verbale stating that the country would assume that responsibility. The representatives of the country varied at some stages, but in any case, the Secretariat advised against that. If I remember well, the Rapporteur — it was the Netherlands at the time — also advised against it. At the end of the day, the discussion culminated with a decision to maintain the practice and to mention the names of the countries.

It is very interesting to see that the issue has emerged again this year. If we end up with a result different from that of the most recent session, we would be very much contradicting our own practice. That would not help our processes very much, either. I assume that it would be very constructive to think of rewarding those who, indeed, personally played a very important role by mentioning their names along with those of their countries. However, we are at a late stage in our three-year cycle, which does not allow us to do that and also be fair to everyone. It is quite fair to consider changing that practice starting next year, with the beginning of a new cycle. So I think that we have already complied, Sir, and we can proceed under your wise leadership on that basis.

The Chair: I propose that the compromise will be to leave mention of the names until the next session, which is the first year of the next cycle.

Mr. Bouabdallah (France) (*spoke in French*): Should I take it that the Commission has just adopted a recommendation for the next cycle?

The Chair: On the basis of the proposal made by the representative of Egypt, I propose that the compromise is not to mention the names of the Vice-Chairs until the following session, which is the first year of the next cycle. Because we are at the end of a cycle, we want to maintain the tradition of not mentioning the names with the countries.

Mr. Moktefi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): If the Commission agrees with the proposal made by our colleague from Egypt, then I suggest that we include it in the Commission's draft report (A/CN.10/2011/CRP.2).

Mr. Aly (Egypt): Since our report is detailing the work that has already been done within the scope of our mandate, it would be incorrect to include in it any decisions about the next cycle. We have not yet decided when exactly it will be held, what topics it will take up or what the overall circumstances will be in that regard. My colleague from France obviously misunderstood my intervention. My comment was not to make a decision about next year's cycle; it was for us to reach a common understanding that is not to be reflected in any report. As far as we are concerned, for the current cycle, what we could include in the report is to keep it as is. The proposal was to continue our practice, to not touch that part of the report, to keep with what we have been doing for the past two years and close the cycle. Then, as I clearly mentioned, we could consider adopting a different practice next year. Even that consideration is not a decision that should be reflected in the current report, but it is something that the countries present should keep in mind when we reach the point at which our mandate allows us to consider the matter.

I hope this provides clarification and can help us move forward.

The Chair: I think that it is now very clear what the proposal is. It is an understanding; it is not going to be mentioned in the report. It is not something that is going to be recommended or agreed upon for next year's report. It is an understanding among representatives that this could be done in the first year of the next cycle rather than this year, which is the end of the cycle. If that is acceptable, I shall take it that representatives accept this proposal.

It was so decided.

The Chair: If there are no further comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt chapter II, paragraphs 2 to 14, as orally amended.

Paragraphs 2 to 14, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chair: We turn next to chapter III, entitled "Documentation", paragraphs 15 and 16. If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt chapter III, paragraphs 15 and 16.

Paragraphs 15 and 16 were adopted.

The Chair: We now turn to chapter IV, entitled "Conclusions and recommendations", paragraphs 17 to 21. If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt chapter IV, paragraphs 17 to 21, as orally amended.

Paragraphs 17 to 21, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chair: May I take it that it is the wish of the Commission, having adopted all paragraphs of the draft, to adopt the draft report of the Commission as a whole, as contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.2, as orally revised?

The draft report, as orally revised, was adopted.

The Chair: Now that the report of the Commission has been adopted and as the 2011 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission is coming to a close, allow me to make a few comments of a general nature.

As representatives are aware, this session was the last in the three-year cycle of the Commission's deliberations on the three substantive items on the agenda. All three substantive items were extensively debated. However, despite much effort and engagement on the part of the chairs of the Working Groups and of delegations, we, as a Commission, were not able to reach consensus. However, the non-papers are a good basis for reaching consensus in our future deliberations. The Commission had a good opportunity to build on the positive developments witnessed during the past year and to send a clear signal that the period of stagnation that had affected the disarmament debate was over. Such a signal could have also spurred progress in other disarmament forums.

Working Group I had very interesting discussions, which have established a possible foundation for consensus in the Commission's deliberations over the next three-year cycle, should there be agreement to undertake them. If so, the Commission will certainly not have to start from scratch.

Working Group II continued to work into the late hours of 14 April, with several attempts made to narrow differences. However, a consensus did not materialize, although the Group was able to take stock of the progress made in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation and to consider some emerging challenges in the decade of the 2010s in connection with the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the limitation of conventional arms. The lack of a consensus on means should in no way be viewed as a lack of consensus on those fundamental goals. Working Group III also had very intense discussions that did not, however, produce a consensus document.

The issues deliberated by the Commission are extremely sensitive politically. They lie at the very core of the security concepts of every Member State. Given the modus operandi of the Commission, the outcome should be a document that commands universal agreement. Such an agreement can be forged only by deliberating on every detail and reflecting every position in the room. Such efforts need time.

All three Chairs who guided the daily discussions of the Working Groups tried very hard and must be commended for their efforts. I would like to use this opportunity to sincerely thank them for a job well done.

In addition to the three substantive items so vigorously deliberated by delegations, there was another issue, involving the methods of work, which was raised on a number of occasions by many delegations. I believe that future sessions of the Commission should devote a certain amount of time to discuss it.

Those delegations that attended the High-level Meeting on Revitalizing the Work of the Conference on Disarmament and Taking Forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations, convened by the Secretary-General on 24 September 2010, voiced grave concerns about the status of the multilateral disarmament machinery. Such views were expressed once again at this session, underscoring the need to address the situation while preserving the role and purpose of each part of the United Nations disarmament machinery. Many Member States stressed that greater efforts should be made to advance international peace and security, and recognized that the Commission, in performing its deliberative role, is playing an extremely important role in the process of building and maintaining global disarmament norms. At the end of yet another unsuccessful cycle, Member States need to act to restore the important role of the Commission, which may have reached a point at which it needs to consider engaging in a debate regarding its methods of work, in order to ensure that it fulfils its solemn mandates from the General Assembly.

Since we have reached the end of the three-year cycle, I would like raise the issue of the agenda for the next cycle. In my capacity as Chair of the Disarmament Commission for 2011, I remain available to assist any delegation wishing to hold consultations on the substantive agenda items for the next cycle. Ideally, such consultations would be held before the introduction of the draft resolution in the First Committee in the fall. I believe that early consultations on this issue will be crucial to determining the future direction of the work of the Disarmament Commission from 2012 to 2014.

Since this is the last meeting of the Commission, I should like to sincerely thank all delegations for their perseverance in trying to reach consensus, for their efforts to bridge positions and for their in-depth analysis of the issues under deliberation. To those members who are not based in New York, I wish a safe journey to their duty stations, and to those who have came from capitals I wish a safe journey back home. Happy holidays to all.

Mr. Cassidy (Indonesia): On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), I would like to thank you, Sir, and your Bureau for the able leadership, dedication and hard work throughout the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

I would also like to express the Movement's great appreciation to the three Chairs of the respective Working Groups, who did an impressive job to promote a constructive debate. The deliberations in all three Working Groups were very important and substantive, although, despite our best efforts, the Commission ended the cycle without making recommendations.

In Working Group I on "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", while the session could not conclude its substantive work, we commend the Chair for his tireless efforts until the very end. We hope that the next cycle will achieve greater progress and make concrete recommendations on nuclear disarmament, which remains the Movement's highest priority.

Concerning Working Group II on "Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade", once again we hoped to conclude our work with agreed and substantive elements. In that regard, we commend the Chair for his tireless efforts throughout the session. Although again this year it was not possible to recommend elements of a draft declaration, the Working Group held discussions on the full range of disarmament issues. We hope that there will be a forward-looking and effective outcome based on principles in the next cycle.

Regarding Working Group III on "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", NAM notes its fruitful discussions. We thank its Chair for her very able handling and stewardship in facilitating the deliberations.

NAM reiterates its long-standing position on the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, the Group reaffirms the relevance and centrality of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that provides for in-depth deliberation of specific disarmament issues and the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

In that context, NAM, for its part, remains ready, as it was at this session of the Disarmament Commission, to continue to engage in a constructive manner with other major groups to ensure a successful

outcome of the next cycle in order to achieve the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

NAM hopes to have a more results-oriented Disarmament Commission session in 2012, and urges greater political will, flexibility and cooperation on the part all countries during the next cycle. We look forward to the Chairs of the Commission and the Working Groups for the next cycle being designated in a timely manner that allows sufficient time for proper preparation to facilitate substantive deliberations and interaction in the Commission's Working Groups.

Before bidding farewell and wishing a safe journey to all colleagues who came to New York to participate in this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, let me also thank the staff of the Secretariat for their assistance to delegations.

Mr. Zimonyi (Hungary): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

First of all, I would like to thank you, Sir, and all members of the Bureau for your concerted efforts in steering this session of the Disarmament Commission at the end of the current triennial cycle. The European Union also wishes to express its appreciation to the Chairs of the three Working Groups — Mr. Knut Langeland of Norway, Mr. Kayode Laro of Nigeria and Mrs. Liseth Ancidey of Venezuela — not only for guiding our discussions in a constructive and transparent manner, but especially for their sincere efforts towards a tangible outcome of the deliberations. Their non-papers provided a useful basis for our deliberations. We give special thanks to the Secretariat for its assistance in our work. Overall, the European Union wishes to commend the constructive atmosphere prevailing throughout this session.

Despite our collective efforts, for the twelfth consecutive year the Disarmament Commission has failed to meet its mandate, set out in the Final Document of the special session held in 1978. Let me recall what the General Assembly decided at that time:

> "The Disarmament Commission shall be a deliberative body, a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, the function of which shall be to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament" (*resolution S-10/2, para. 118 (a)*).

Such recommendations should be relayed, as appropriate, through the General Assembly to the Conference on Disarmament, the negotiating forum tasked with drafting treaties in the field of disarmament. It is important to note that the General Assembly explicitly emphasized the subjection of draft multilateral disarmament conventions to the normal procedures applicable in the law of treaties.

Our discussions in the course of the past three weeks have shown that disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control remain highly significant matters, with many challenges still waiting to be overcome. The European Union regrets that both the deliberative and the negotiating bodies set up under the auspices of the General Assembly have been falling short of their agreed goals for more than a decade.

At the same time, progress has been made in resolving disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues in other forums, both within and outside the framework of the United Nations. That demonstrates that deliberations and negotiations on such issues can yield results. From our perspective, the United Nations bodies devoted to disarmament matters should re-engage in the process as soon as possible. To that end, the European Union calls for more focused deliberations of the Disarmament Commission in the course of the next triennial cycle. In that context, I would like to recall the following elements of previous decisions related to its conduct of work.

First, the Disarmament Commission should direct its attention to specific subjects as opposed to generic and repetitive discussions. Secondly, in principle, no more than two carefully chosen items should be placed on the substantive agenda of the Disarmament Commission, in accordance with its previous practice. Thirdly, progress achieved should be relayed, as appropriate, to subsequent sessions through working papers or non-papers submitted by the Chair. Making full use of those existing options would facilitate the drawing up of concrete recommendations in the course

of the next cycle. In addition, the programme of work of the Disarmament Commission should be comprehensive and balanced, taking into account disarmament and non-proliferation, with due consideration of conventional weapons.

Moreover, let me emphasize that the European Union stands ready to engage in discussions pertaining to the Disarmament Commission in the context of the review of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba fully supports the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Cuba regrets that, for the twelfth consecutive time, the Disarmament Commission has again concluded its work without agreeing substantive recommendations. It is beneficial to all to have a universal member body that enables us to discuss in-depth highly relevant issues. However, that is not enough. Our mandate includes not only the deliberation but also the production of specific recommendations, and we should acknowledge that we have not fulfilled it.

Some have referred to so-called momentum in the field of disarmament. But reality does not support any such assertion. What happened this year in the Disarmament Commission is not an isolated event. It is no mere coincidence that in the Conference on Disarmament, too, all too many years have passed without substantive negotiations, or that the tens of resolutions on disarmament adopted by the General Assembly have gone quite simply unimplemented.

Cuba supports the optimization of the disarmament machinery of the United Nations, including the Disarmament Commission. However, we do not share the position of some parties who question the relevance of this Commission or attribute the lack of concrete results to the supposed ineffectiveness of its working methods. Such an approach diverts attention from the true obstacles we are facing. The principal difficulty facing the disarmament machinery is the lack of genuine political will on the part of certain States to achieve real progress, in particular on nuclear disarmament. Cuba will continue to work to strengthen the key roles of the Disarmament Commission and of the General Assembly in the area of disarmament.

We reiterate that nuclear disarmament is, and should continue to be, our top priority in the sphere of disarmament. It is simply unacceptable that there are still tens of thousands of nuclear weapons in the world today capable of destroying the world several times over. We will continue to work tirelessly in the Commission and other forums towards the total global prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

The fact that the Commission has not agreed on concrete recommendations on the fourth disarmament decade must not lead us to resignation. We should in no way relent in our efforts to declare the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade, a goal of unquestionable importance. We hope that the General Assembly will consider and take a decision on this matter in a timely manner.

With regard to the issue of confidence-building measures, Cuba supports such measures as a means of strengthening international peace and security, so long as they fully respect the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. By their voluntary nature, confidence-building measures cannot be imposed; nor are there any one-size-fits-all solutions. Cuba proposes, as a genuinely effective confidence-building measure, the immediate creation of a United Nations fund comprising at last half of current global military expenditure to meet the socio-economic development needs of countries. We also propose the agreement, as soon as possible, of an international convention providing for the elimination of nuclear weapons within 25 years and for their irreversible prohibition.

In conclusion, I should like to express our gratitude to you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau for the work achieved. We appreciate in particular the tireless efforts of the Chairs of the three Working Groups, who never shied away from their important work. We also thank the entire Secretariat team for its valuable support.

Mr. Arrocha (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to thank you, Sir, the members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups for contributing to the work of the Disarmament Commission.

After yet another session of this body and yet another three weeks of meetings, we find ourselves with the same predictable results as usual: the failure of the Disarmament Commission to achieve its goal of producing substantive recommendations on

disarmament. Unfortunately, this comes as no surprise to any one. However, it does not mean that we cannot reflect on and consider the factors whereby this same pattern is repeated year on year.

First, we have confirmed the urgent need to revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery, including working methods, which are clearly ineffectual given their inability to produce significant concrete results. The prevailing gloomy atmosphere, which we addressed in our statement during the general debate, was reaffirmed by the low level of participation on the part of delegations in the work of the Commission. While there is no doubt that the Disarmament Commission is the sole universal deliberating body of the United Nations on disarmament, less than one third of members participated in the discussions over the past three weeks. This confirms the rejection by States Members of the United Nations of false expectations of success after more than 10 years of deadlock. In addition, time was hardly used efficiently. The only tangible outcome of this session has been the spending of resources from our national contributions, which could have been devoted to counteracting the effects of the multiple crises facing the world today.

The paralysis in the United Nations disarmament machinery is completely unacceptable, especially when our world remains threatened by the existence of nuclear arms and the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional arms. The time has come to take decisions. We hope to be up to this historic task.

The Chair: The interpreters have been kind enough to remain with us an additional 15 minutes beyond the scheduled time. I think it is time to release them. I would therefore urge the representatives of Norway, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Nigeria to speak in English, if possible, as we cannot hold the interpreters longer than that. I sincerely thank all the interpreters, who volunteered to stay an additional 15 minutes beyond 1 p.m.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): I would like to thank you, Sir, for the excellent way in which you have presided over our proceedings. Let me also thank the Bureau, the Secretariat and the Chairs of Working Groups II and III. Yet again, the Disarmament Commission has not been able to deliver substantive recommendations. Some of us had believed that it might have been difficult to achieve consensus on substantive matters, but at least we tried. On a positive note, we had many interesting debates on a number of topics. From that perspective, we clearly fulfilled our deliberative mandate. But if the measurement of our success is substantive recommendations, then this session follows a long pattern of Disarmament Commission sessions that have not lived up to expectations. This is clearly no the fault of the Chair of this session or of the Secretariat.

My delegation believes it is high time to take a critical look at how we carry out our business. Perhaps we should, before deciding on a new cycle or setting the agenda for next year, take some time to discuss what we really want out of the Commission. In my delegation's opening statement, some suggestions were flagged; due to time constraints, I will not repeat those now. But perhaps, in a few months, we could set aside some time for informal consultations on how to make the best use of the Commission. Perhaps we should also think outside of the box.

Mr. Seifi Pargou (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I would also like to join others in thanking you, Sir, the Bureau and the three Chairs of the Working Groups for your able leadership and dedication during the 2011 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

We attach great importance to the role and functions of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body mandated to consider and make recommendations on various disarmament issues. Although the Commission has formulated more than a dozen guidelines and recommendations in the past, regrettably it has not yet been able to formulate an exclusive set of recommendations on nuclear disarmament. We hope that in the next cycle, if all countries are able to inject stronger political will, increased flexibility and cooperation into their work, the Commission will be able to achieve greater progress on nuclear disarmament, which we consider to be our highest priority in the field of disarmament. We also expect that the Chairs of the Commission and Working Groups will be designated well in advance of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in order to facilitate the deliberations at the next cycle of the Commission.

For our part, we stand ready to work towards improving the United Nations disarmament machinery in the context of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which is the pertinent and appropriate forum.

Mr. Okafor (Nigeria): On behalf of the African Group, I would like to thank you, Sir, for your leadership during the 2011 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. I would also like to thank the Bureau for its dedication and hard work throughout the session. The African Group wishes to express appreciation to the Chairs of the three Working Groups for the 2011 substantive session for their excellent work and impressive facilitation of debates. We wish to commend their commitment and efforts to moderate the course of discussions.

The African Group associates itself with the closing remarks made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The debates in Working Group I on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons were both passionate and engaging. We wish to commend the Chair who, despite the variety of opinions on agenda item 4, worked so tirelessly to provide the required leadership. We reiterate our desire to achieve greater progress on this item as we move into the next cycle of the Disarmament Commission.

In Working Group II, on the elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade, there was much hope that the enabling climate would facilitate more progress and lead us to a consensus. We commend the optimism of the Chair and his tireless efforts to achieve a more positive outcome. Notwithstanding the absence of a consensus on elements of a draft declaration for the fourth disarmament decade, we look forward to a brighter, effective and fruitful session in 2012.

The third and final working group, Working Group III, on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, provided a platform with the constructive engagement of ideas. We wish to thank the amiable Chair for her skill and disposition.

In addition, the African Group wishes to thank all the delegations for their courtesy and professionalism. We wish to underscore the need to look to the future with hope even as we prepare for the next session of the Disarmament Commission and a new cycle in 2012. Furthermore, the African Group wishes to stress the importance of multilateral diplomacy on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation. Our commitment to the role of the Disarmament Commission as the sole deliberative body within the United Nations machinery for that purpose remains unyielding. It is our fervent hope that more progress will be made at the next session of the Disarmament Commission.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to the entire staff of the secretariat of the Commission for providing the necessary support and assistance to delegations.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): My delegation would like to align itself with the concluding remarks made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I would also like to formally thank you, Sir, for your efforts and for having successfully steered the Disarmament Commission at this session. I also thank the three Chairs of the Working Groups for their excellent work.

Let me reiterate that the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as the sole deliberative body in the disarmament machinery, has immense potential. My delegation hopes that, in the next cycle, the Commission will be able to make substantive recommendations by mustering the necessary political will that has helped all of us to achieve results in the Commission in the past.

Mr. Kvarnström (Sweden): First of all, Sir, let me extend my sincere thanks to you, the Chairs of the Working Groups, the Secretariat and its interpreters for all your efforts and hard work during the past three weeks. To save time, I would state that my delegation fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Hungary on behalf of the European Union. But let me also say that I fully support what was said by the delegation of Norway. We also share some of the concerns expressed by the Mexican delegation.

The Disarmament Commission is a part of the disarmament machinery that has been paralysed. It is precisely because we are committed to the United Nations that we insist that its disarmament machinery be able to deliver. That is why we would like here today to repeat the call made by many at last year's

High-level Meeting for the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission to review their working methods.

Mr. Sanabria (Spain): First of all, my delegation would like to align itself with the statement made by the representative of Hungary on behalf of the European Union. I would also like to echo the concerns expressed by the delegations of Norway and Sweden; we share them fully. We also share all the concerns that have been expressed by other delegations, in particularly those set forth very eloquently by the Mexican delegation.

We want to add that, in our view, it is necessary to rethink and reflect upon the working methods of the Commission in the context of the more than desirable — the needed — revitalization of the disarmament machinery. But we believe, of course, that we must start here, ourselves, by thinking about what we can do in order to improve the efficiency of the Commission. We have made great efforts and expended a lot of energy with respect to the procedural aspects to the detriment of the substance, which is of course what we should really be striving to address. As a matter of fact, the experience of this entire cycle, and more concretely of this substantive session, has to be taken into account in order to start the new cycle with more focused objectives so that the Commission is able to be not only the deliberative forum that it is — that we have accomplished — but also a forum that is able to come to conclusions and make recommendations.

That having been said, I would also join others in thanking you, Sir, for your efforts. Speaking as a Vice-Chair, it was a pleasure and an honour to have worked with you during the past few weeks. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for its enormous support. We hope that next year we will be in a position to improve efficiency and achieve the results that we were not able to achieve this year.

Other business

The Chair: Before I bring this meeting to an end, allow me to express my gratitude to all delegations for their constructive spirit and for the support they have extended to me. I also wish to express my gratitude to the other members of the Bureau, who helped me to shoulder the responsibility of smoothly running the Commission. I am particularly thankful to them. I would like to thank the Secretary of the Commission, the Secretaries of the Working Groups and staff members of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, the Office of Disarmament Affairs, the interpreters, the conference officers, the document officers and the sound engineers. My thanks also go to all those who have worked hard to make this session of the Disarmament Commission a success.

Closure of the session

The Chair: I declare closed the 2011 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.